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ABSTRACT

Information about the influence fathers have on their children's development is provided in this booklet. Chapter One reviews research focused on father-absence and inadequate fathering. Societal expectations for fathers, paternal deprivation, children's emotional, cognitive and social development as well as sex-role adjustment are briefly discussed. Chapter Two provides an anecdote showing how one father influenced his daughter's self-concept. Chapter Three reports the results of a study of the relationship of four father behaviors (promotion of independence, strictness, use of reward, aggression and punishment) to masculinity-femininity preference scores of 4-year-old nursery school children. Chapter Four suggests several ways parents can positively influence their children's school achievement. The concluding chapter provides answers to 10 questions fathers frequently ask about fathering. (Author/RH)

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The Effect of Fa[illegible]ence and Inadequate Fa[illegible]g o[illegible] Children's Pe[illegible]ment

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THE EFFECT OF FATHER-ABSENCE AND INADEQUATE FATHERING ON CHILDREN'S PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Debbie Coonrod

Debcon, Incorporated

PS 012075

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In appreciation of the fathering received by Marcee and Chic from their dad, Ralph Coonrod.

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INTRODUCTION

John and Colin Gwin
Photograph courtesy Jacqueline Stone

A deepening sense of personal autonomy results as mothers and fathers see their children developing self-confidence, exhausting the resources for learning that are available, and mirroring their attitudes and beliefs about positive living. Operating with a trial-and-error technology of child-rearing does not guarantee satisfaction with self in the parental role.

Like many couples, Ralph and I found ourselves pursuing a life style of long work hours, frequent moves, and frequent periods of father-absence. The long view did not promise the rewards of a strong springboard from home for our children and our lives.

A few years later it was possible to pursue a study of the available literature of father's influence on the child's developing personality. The resulting dissertation led to an enduring interest in parenting.

It is my (our) opinion that parents can and will do a careful job of decision-making when given adequate information about natural consequences, options, and alternatives.

Ephesians 6:4 D.H.C.

CHAPTER 1

Pam, Colin, and John Gwin
Photograph courtesy Jacqueline Stone

The Effect of Father-Absence and Inadequate Fathering on Children's Personality Development

The absent father in the context of our cultural expectations for the family generates a number of dilemmas. Providing the needed financial support for children places a great strain on the single woman physically, emotionally, and socially. The struggles and burdens on mothers become handicaps for the children. Yet, according to demographic data, 33 percent of black families and 10 percent of white families are headed by women (Farley, 1977).

In the past, war has definitely been responsible for father absence. One of the monsters of the American work ethic and the corporative structure is the removal of fathers from their homes. Finally, in my opinion, a lack of knowledge by fathers of the effect of their behavior and their availability on the developing personality of the child is shortchanging the potential of their children as adults and of themselves as fathers to becoming actualized human beings.

Societal Expectations for Father

Our knowledge of group behavior reliably predicts that father's role in the nuclear family unit must portray a role model cohesiveness that is compatible with the expectations of the greater society for paternity. As society's expectations change so will the profile of fathers as a larger group.

In 48 societies fathers assume an instrumental role in family life while in only 8 societies is fathering predominately viewed by the culture as an expressive role (McCandless, 1968).

By definition, the instrumental role includes the paternal potential for strength and power in character and activity. Father is perceived as the primary provider of material needs, the interpreter of societal codes, the coordinator of community resources, and the limit-setter for all members of the family (Benson, 1968).

In contrast, the expressive role represents an interdependence and communication between father and child from birth. It includes the physical care of both the child's explicit and implicit needs.

Father's involvement in child-rearing duties, in the educational process and in the spiritual molding of the child hit an all-time low in the post-World War II decades. Divorce, mobility, over-time, corporate structure, and a general negative value for the importance of father-

involvement during those first years contribute to this decreasing involvement.

Fathers who do not engage in the growing stages of their young sons often become devoted enthusiasts of the sport activities of their teenagers. Girls most often continue through the teenage years with similar or less attention from father than they had experienced as young children.

Studies indicate that children who meet their potential in academic settings have fathers who are available for a minimum of six to fourteen hours per week (Blanchard & Biller, 1971), prefer young children (Barton, Dielman, & Cattell, 1974); promote independence (Coonrod, 1977); develop information seeking dialogue; and read stories, count and sing with their child from an early age (Radin, 1973). These fathers have a positive masculine self-image (Jackson, Meara, & Arora, 1974); set limits (Norwick & Segal, 1974; Hoffman, 1961); and have a purposeful and supportive working relationship with their wives (Biller, 1974).

Paternal Deprivation

Occasionally a father's personality does not lend itself toward effective human relations with children. Most often, however, the male has not had the opportunity prior to fatherhood to study his role in the family. Paternal behavior is based on neither knowledge nor belief. Decisions in parenting are made on the observable facts at hand and

are reactionary at best in the majority of the cases. The paternal role model an individual father adopts is often based on the familiar, "the way Dad did it."

Some fathers are uncomfortable in the decision-making role, in conflict strategy, and in taking the leadership reins. The cautious and less secure male may, in fact, abdicate both the customary instrumental dimensions of fathering and the equally desirable expressive behaviors. Role-reversal by parents in the family government is as debilitating to personal autonomy of the child as father absence. In fact, many of the recent scholars of paternal influence on children's development feel that the influence of the ineffective, passive father, and the over-restrictive and rejecting father are, in some cases, even more damaging to healthy personality formation than the effects of the absent father.

According to the literature, the ineffective, passive father is one who relinquishes the instrumental role. This paternal model prefers that the wife make all the decisions concerning the children (Barton, Dielman, & Cattell, 1974). On the other hand, the over-restrictive and rejecting father holds high expectations for behavior prior to the child's developmental ability and uses harsh, strict disciplinary means for obtaining conforming behavior (Barton, Dielman, & Cattell, 1974).

Sex-role Adjustment

In all theories related to sex-role adjustment, both fathers and mothers play a vital role. The father is a particularly powerful influence on the son's masculine orientation in all theories. Table 1 compiles a sampling of factors in the sex-role adjustment process and the relationship with paternal deprivation as reported in the literature.

A factor not reflected in Table 1 is the need for children to see both parents appreciating compliments from one another. This interaction pattern is most influential in the child's total development. This chart also does not show that the child's sex-role orientation is relatively stable by or at three years of age. Sex-role preference and sex-role adoption may be greatly influenced by the external social environment. Peer and adult expectations build upon the strength and the stability of the child's sex-role orientation (Biller, 1974).

Emotional Development

The individual's emotional development is fostered by feeling experiences encountered when pursuing needs. Table 2 reflects the growing interest in studying the effects of fathering on personality development. The emotional scars created by absent fathers, by rejecting fathers and, by weak, passive fathers depreciate children's feelings of self worth and adequacy both in their sexuality and in their general competency.

Table 1. Characteristics of Sex-Role Adjustment Fostered by Absent or Inadequate Paternal Interaction during Childhood as Reported in the Literature

Paternal Interaction	Sex-Role Adjustment Characteristics				
	compensatory masculinity	negative image of adult males	less masculine sex-role orientation and/or low masculinity	sex-role conflict	sex-role anxiety
A. Physically Absent					
1. divorce; separation; desertion	Lynn & Sawrey 1959; McCord, McCord & Thurber 1962*		Biller 1968b, 1969b, 1974a; Biller & Bahn 1971; Leichty 1956; Burton 1972; Green 1974; Altus 1958; Kohlberg 1966	Burton 1972; Burton & Whiting 1961	Burton 1972; Burton & Whiting 1961; McCord, McCord & Thurber 1962
2. Death					
B. Low Availability; Low Participation	Lynn & Sawrey 1959				
C. Dysfunctional Child-Rearing Approaches					
1. passive-maternal dominance or role-reversal		Biller 1971			
2. over-restrictive			Hetherington 1965; Hetherington & Frankie 1967; Biller 1969a; Block von der Lippe & Block 1973		
3. rejecting	Block, von der Lippe, & Block 1973				

*Full references can be found in the bibliography at the back of the article.

Table 3. Emotional Characteristics Fostered by Absent or Inadequate Paternal Interaction during Childhood, as Reported in the Literature

Paternal Interaction	Emotional Characteristics			
	emotionally disturbed	low self esteem; feelings of inferiority	poor personality adjustment	anxious; fearful
A. Physically Absent				
1. divorce separation desertion	Trunnell 1968*	Santrock 1970b	Stolz et al. 1954; Much 1961	
2. death				
B. Low Availability; Low Participation			Reuter & Biller 1973	
C. Dysfunctional Child-Rearing Approaches				
1. passive maternal dominance or role-reversal	Alexander 1969	Biller 1971	Reuter & Biller 1973	
2. over-restrictive	Hoffman 1960; Ferreira et al. 1966	Slater 1962	Becker et al. 1959; Peterson et al. 1959	Allinsmith 1960; Becker & Krug 1964
3. rejecting		Mussen et al. 1963; Medinnus 1963		

*Full references can be found in the bibliography at the back of the article.

Cognitive Development

The impact of paternal deprivation on cognitive development is reported to be cumulative (Deutsch & Brown, 1964) and to be greatest when the onset of absence begins in the first two years of the child's life (Santrock, 1973). Table 3 reflects the consistency of the findings and the quantity of research done which reports the negative influence of paternal deprivation on cognitive development.

Social Development

Learning to accept, learning to be accepted and learning to interact with both males and females begins at birth. In Table 4 effects upon the social development of children from father-absent and powerless males are reported. The area of social development and sex-role development of the male child and its possible relationship to fathering behaviors have been of interest to research for a long time.

Historically, fathers have been expected to interpret societal mores to their offspring. The absence of father and the effect of a passive or over-restrictive, rejecting father contribute greatly to anti-social behavior and higher crime rate for youth. The acting-out behavior of children in these families is not restricted by those paternal limits provided by the competent, leading father. The physical structure of the family, where father is absent or inadequate, erodes the force of mother's rules. An

Table 3. Cognitive Characteristics Fostered by Absent or Inadequate Paternal Interaction during Childhood as Reported in the Literature

Paternal Interaction	Cognitive Characteristics	
	Feminine Patterns of Performance	Low Academic Aptitude/ Achievement/Motivation
A. Physically Absent		
1. divorce separation desertion	Carlsmith 1964; Altus 1958; Nelsen & Maccoby 1966	Blanchard & Biller 1971; Deutsch & Brown 1964; [illegible]sing, Zagorin & Nelson 1970; Santrock 1972; Sutton-Smith, Rosenberg & Landy 1968; Cortis & Fleming 1968; Kohlberg 1966
2. death		
B. Low Availability Low Participation		Mussen et al. 1963; Cervantes 1965; Blanchard & Biller 1971
C. Dysfunctional Child-Rearing Approaches		
1. passive maternal dominance or role-reversal		Cervantes 1965; Smelser 1963
2. over-restrictive		Barton, Dielman & Cattell 1974; Radin 1973
3. rejecting		Hurley 1967

Table 4. Social Characteristics Fostered by Absent or Inadequate Paternal Interaction during Childhood as Reported in the Literature

Paternal Interaction	Social Characteristics						
	more negative antisocial behavior	dependency and conformity in peer relations; low aggression	indication of atypical moral development	higher crime rate and delinquency	preference for immediate gratification	mistrust of others	vocational adjustment problems
A. Physical; Absent							
1. divorce separation desertion	Siegmann 1966; Wylie & Delgado 1959	Hetherington 1966; Sears 1951; Sears, Pintler, & Sears 1946; Bach 1946; Santrock 1970a; Stolz et al. 1954; McCord, McCord & Thurber 1962	Hoffman 1971	McCord, McCord & Thurber 1962; Anderson 1968	Mischel 1961; Goldstein, 1972	Santrock 1970b; Mischel 1958	Suedfield 1967; Bell 1969
2. death							
B. Low Availability; Low Participation		Bacon, Child & Barry 1963; Lynn & Sawrey 1959		Bacon, Child & Barry 1963			
C. Dysfunctional Child-Rearing Approaches							
1. passive maternal dominance or role-reversal		Kagan 1964; Hoffman 1961	Becker et al. 1959; Peterson et al. 1959				
2. over-restrictive				Jenkins 1968			
3. rejecting				Bandura & Walters 1959; McCord, McCord & Howard 1959; Medinnus 1965			

ineffective father seems to invoke contempt and disregard for the male image (Biller, 1971).

Feminine Development

In his theory of sex-role development, Freud postulated that all children identify with the mother first and that the male child later identifies with the father from a sense of fear of father.

Studies are beginning to reflect the equal importance of father's influence in feminine development. The direction of the influence of negative fathering relationships is reflected in Table 5. How father treats mother, the amount and quality of the time spent interacting with daughters, the limits set and the expectations for behavior, and the continuity of presence all seem to greatly influence feminine development. A girl's heterosexual relationships are strongly aligned with the kind of fathering that she experiences.

A great deal of literature has been written defining masculinity and femininity. Stereotyped terms (Coonrod, 1977) are slowly disappearing and children are enjoying a fuller range of appropriate behaviors. Reaching one's highest potential as an individual cannot become reality until both sexes are valued by society.

Table 5. Characteristics of Female Behavior Fostered by Absent or Inadequate Paternal Interaction during Childhood as Reported in the Literature

Paternal Interaction	Disruption of Feminine Development	Difficulty in Heterosexual Relationships	Low Personal Adjustment	Homosexual	Low Academic Aptitude/ Achievement
A. Physically Absent			Hetherington 1972		
1. divorce separation desertion	Santrock 1970	Hetherington 1972; Jacabson & Ruder 1969; Landy, Rosenberg, & Sutton-Smith 1967; Hetherington 1972			Landy, Rosenberg, & Sutton-Smith 1969; Lessing, Zagorin & Nelson 1970
2. death					
B. Low Availability; Low Participation	Brown 1963				
C. Dysfunctional					
1. passive	Biller & Zung 1972	Hoffman 1961a		Thompson et al. 1973	
2. over-restrictive to abusive			Becker & Krug 1964; Hoffman 1960; Block, von der Lippe & Block 1973; Lidz, Parker, Cornelison 1956; Fish & Biller 1973		
3. rejecting					Heilburn et al. 1967; Hurley 1967

Implications

Fathers' availability and leadership are vital to the healthy functioning of each individual in the family. In this culture, fathers still band families together. Their contributions are not peripheral and indirect as they were believed to be for so long. Strengthening fathers' preparation for their responsibility is urgent.

Encouraging the offering of courses in child development to both pre-teenage boys and girls which include practicum opportunities; soliciting both expectant fathers and fathers of preschoolers to participate in parenting classes; and arranging for fathers to have direct input into the elementary school curriculum must become the foci of future planning.

Children seek other male models when they are available. Accessibility to a variety of male models also increases a child's ease in his interactions. To recognize the changing primary male models in many children's lives requires a different type of structuring for all programming. (Traditionally only the biological father and mother have been consulted and at that most often it was mother.) Openly including all the adults that have an impact on children's lives means a multi-dimensional approach to any reliable evaluation for programming decisions for children. This means having a multi-dimensional vision regarding the salient persons in children's lives.

Legal decisions for child custody must recognize the economic, social, emotional and cognitive handicaps that are inherent in the single parent matriarchal family. The child, however, must not become the slave of confusion and conflict from a lack of accessibility to either parent. The child must know that one parent assumes responsibility for his security. More and more often fathers are being granted their right to help structure his partial or full participation in the remaining child-rearing years.

Finally, the need to recommit ourselves as a society for responsible behavior, in and out of marriage, as both male and female in our biological roles, must be pursued. Both the creative act of human life and the healthy nurturance of children require a mother and a father.

CHAPTER II

Annie Burton
Photograph courtesy Jacqueline Stone

Fathers Influence Success

It is always enlightening and often amusing to happen upon your preschool child engaged in conversation with another preschooler. Their perception of daily schedules of home, school and community from past, present, or future time zones is always egocentric. All that is occurring on stage during these early years of their lives involves and revolves around themselves. The young child is unable to look at the situation from another person's point of view.

Just recently I came upon Marcee and her friend Jimmy swinging. As they pushed and swang up and down, they discussed the prospects of their future lives. What had preceded the conversation, I do not know. As I arrived, Jimmy was saying, "When I grow up, I am going to be a football player. My daddy gave me a football for my birthday."

Marcee responded, "When I grow up, I'm going to be a basketball player. I got a basketball for my birthday and I'm already practicing."

Jimmy tried to focus Marcee's attention to a problem in her proclamation by saying, "Marcee, you can't be a basketball player; you're a girl. The only thing you can be is a cheerleader."

Emphatically, Marcee left no doubt as to her value of this unexpected male view. "I can too be a basketball player! My daddy told me I can be anything that I want to be." (And indeed Ralph had told her just that at the dinner table a few nights before. I'm sure, however, that he had not anticipated this particular interpretation when he answered her question, "What can I be when I grow up, Daddy?")

Jimmy side-stepped the brewing dispute by enlarging on the exceptional football player that he would make. Marcee painted her basketball career with grandeur until they both decided to leave the swings.

I sat there reflecting on their conversation and that recent body of research material that I had been collecting. Fathers have most often been found to hold higher aspirational goals for their sons. Yet when 10 of America's outstanding women leaders were questioned, they said that their fathers encouraged and supported their ambitions at an early age and maintained an active interest and pride in their continuing successes.

Research findings have also suggested that there appeared to be different behaviors resulting from a good paternal relationship depending upon the sex of the child. A positive paternal influence of the boy's life has been reflected in higher aspirational goals. A higher

frequency of membership in school social activities, however, was shown for girls who had a positive father relationship.

The longevity of Marcee's career as a basketball player may have fleeting credibility. Assuredly, the relationship between Marcee's concept of her role potential has been permanently influenced by her father.

CHAPTER III

J.W. and Randy Powell
Photograph courtesy Jacqueline Stone

The Relationship Between Selected Paternal Child-Rearing Practices and The Sex Role Preferences of Four-Year-Old Nursery School Children

The traditional expectations for sex-appropriate behaviors have appeared to be being replaced to the casual observer with modified models and with less explicit definitions for femininity and masculinity. This research focused on four specific father behaviors and the relationship with masculinity-femininity preference scores of four-year-old nursery school children.

One-hundred four-year-old nursery school children, living with their natural parents, were chosen from nursery schools in three southern Indiana metropolitan areas. Each of the one-hundred fathers of these children had agreed in writing to the participation of his nursery school child and himself in the study.

Each child was asked to play a game (It Scale for Children)[1] by a trained female tester during the nursery school day. Fathers responded to a self-report Child-Rearing Family Practices Inventory[2] and returned it to the school. The four father scales focused on in this

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[1]Brown, D. G., It Scale for Children (ITSC), Psychological Test Specialists, Missoula, Montana, 1956.

[2]Child-Rearing and Family Practices Inventory, The Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, Champaigne, Illinois, 1971, 9 pp.

study were Paternal promotion of independence, Paternal strictness, Paternal use of reward, and Paternal aggression and punishment. The variables replicated those of the Dielman, et al. study labeled a similar name.[3]

Pearson product-moment correlations of father scale scores with ITSC scores and Cronbach's Alpha Reliability of CRFPI scales and items were conducted by use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The major findings were summarized as follows:

1. Paternal promotion of independence has shown no significant relationship to ITSC scores of four-year-old girls.

2. Paternal promotion of independence has shown at the .05 level of significance a relationship to the scores of four-year-old boys.

3. Paternal strictness has shown no relationship to ITSC scores of girls.

4. Paternal strictness has shown no relationship to ITSC scores for boys.

5. Paternal use of reward has shown no significant relationship to ITSC scores of four-year-old girls.

6. Paternal use of reward has shown no significant

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[3]Dielman, T. E.; Barton, Keith; and Cattell, R.B., "Cross-Validational Evidence on the Structure of Parental Reports of Child-Rearing Practices, "The Journal of Social Psychology 90:243-250, December, 1973.

relationship to ITSC scores for four-year-old boys.

7. Paternal aggression and punishment have shown no significant relationship to ITSC scores of four-year-old girls.

8. Paternal aggression and punishment have shown no significnat relationship to ITSC scores of four-year-old boys.

The findings appeared to support the conclusions drawn by others that masculine sex-role preferences for boys were dependent not on segregated use of reward or punishment by father, but were affected by father presence, expectation, and encouragement of the child to handle his own peer relationships. This study also supported the conclusions of other research that four-year-old boys have formed sex-role appropriate preferences.

Girls were shown to have adopted their sex-role preferences with considerable variability and with apparently little relationship to the four paternal factors of this study.

The Dielman, et al. scale, Paternal strictness did not hold together in a homogeneous fashion in this study.

The following recommendations have been suggested based on the findings:

1. Activities and staffing of preschool programs must respond to differing sex-role preferences of young

children that the maximum human potential of each individual child might be achieved.

2. Intervention with male models and interactions must be begun in the home even before enrollment in preschool programs.

3. Educational programs for potential fathers and for fathers of children at all ages must become a priority for educational programs.

4. Research grants and honoria are needed to stimulate the development of instruments for measuring paternal behaviors, and to initiate research activity investigating relationships with children's behaviors.

CHAPTER IV

Elizabeth and Tom Funk
Photograph courtesy Jacqueline Stone

Helping Your Child at Home

Johnny Jones is entering Early Break Elementary School. Both Mom and Dad are anxious that his school years be successful ones. After a visit with the principal and teachers, both know that Johnny will not be bringing work home following the school day. Both parents are concerned that their home contribute to Johnny's maximum development and achievement during his school years.

Recent studies have revealed a number of important times, procedures, and relationships that positively influence school achievement.

TIMES

Children spontaneously offer the most informative insight into their school day immediately after school. Picking up Johnny at school or having a nutritious snack waiting when he arrives home draws Johnny and Mom into a caring relationship. Johnny generally talks exuberantly with his attentive audience. Any needed special help will surface during these heart-to-heart chats. Now Mom can plan some specific games or exercises.

Times other than the first hour after school have

to be structured with specific probing techniques. Some children do not share their school experiences regardless of the probing skills of parents.

PROCEDURES

Routines. As in every other walk of life, routine plays a significant role in developing expectancy and in producing dependable results. Regular routines for the time between school dismissal and drifting off to Nodding Town are most important.

This routine is two-pronged. One prong is disciplining self as parent to hear the heart of the inner child. The second prong is maintaining the child's after school schedule.

Questions asking. Open-ended questions such as "Why do you look so happy? sad?" solicit the child's trust of parental understanding and support. Followed by "Why do you think you felt happy (sad) when that happened?" contributes to the child's verbalizing his emotional and social problems.

A meaningful relationship between parent and child regarding school happenings should precede specific questions relating to performance. Once a rapport is again established, questions such as "Was there anything you didn't understand today?" lead to an opporunity for valuable intervention by Mom for helping Johnny resolve

his own questions.

Johnny can now take these problems to his own work area. During his working process, Mom should occassionally stop to survey the level of understanding reflected in the work product. Before Johnny finally puts materials in their designated places, a thorough review is warranted.

Specific family times. The dinner hour should be an hour of anticipation for every family member. This becomes a treasured family experience when each member is expected to share one new thing learned during the day. Start off expecting recall of some fact or event but willing to compromise. Until the habit of retaining a new detail in the informational storehouse of the minds has had adequate exercise, the dinner hour sharing will move slowly. Mom and Dad will find the exercise entertaining too as they develop skill in recalling a new fact or experience that was a part of the day's encounter.

Reading stories at bedtime does not need to end with preschool years. Most families do some reading before shutting off the lights at night. The final rounds can include a short inquiry into the turn of events in the latest book the child is reading. The nature of the question should change from night to night

to something suggested by the title or by pictures in the book.

RELATIONSHIPS

Father's involvement in the child's preschool and elementary school years are of prime importance. This involvement spans several areas. Father's focused attention on the children's needs produces dividends for both dad and child.

In a report by Blanchard and Biller, children performed well on school tasks who had a father physically available between a minimum of six hours per week to two hours per day. (Fathers should volunteer to visit school and to attend conferences.) Fathers who asked questions of their children that sought information had children who show high achievement in school according to Radin. Higher academic performance by children of fathers who rarely used punishment and who rarely used praise was reported in the research findings of Dielman, et al. Fathers who promoted independence in their children had higher masculine scores according to a study by Coonrod.

The significance of father's involvement does not deflate the value of mother love. The investment of mothering skills has a long research history. Every mother must remember to be on her child's team. Some-

where in her kitchen grafitti should be, "Beat sheep don't win."

IMPLICATIONS

Applying factual how-to for children does not by itself guarantee social, emotional, and intellectual development. Tutoring may ease target problems, however, permanent gains are made through positive relationships with both parents. Planning to make oneself available during the child's awake hours, establishing some expected routines, and strengthening the parental relationships decidedly influences Johnny's school achievement.

In a society where a greater number of parents are finding it necessary to work requires defining skills and behaviors wanted of the caregiver selected. Require the babysitter to provide a snack and to sit down and talk with Johnny when he comes in from school.

For the single female-headed household, maximize the number of male models accessible to the son. Contact a Big Brother Club. Visit grandpa, uncles, and other male relatives as frequently as possible.

All parents need to continually evaluate their relationships with each other in the routines of home life and with each individual child.

CHAPTER V

Colin and John Gwin
Photograph courtesy Pam Gwin

Questions Most Asked By Fathers

Male groups interested in the effect of the masculine influence on children's personality have begun to emerge. The number of opportunities for group meetings continues to be limited.

Within the group of participants, the social and the educational backgrounds range from students to corporate executives and from teenage high school males to men with doctorate degrees. Truck-drivers and psychologists alike find themselves desiring research-related information to make child-rearing decisions.

The inducement that has prompted small groups of fathers to discuss their concerns as fathers with each other have been

1) Dad's Night at various nursery school programs,
2) Father's Day Retreat for church Sunday School programs,
3) Special series planned by public library programs and,
4) Conference workshops planned by organizations that include families.

Rarely in a mixed group have men been willing to either openly expose their deepest feelings about their own father and or their concerns about their fathering abilities. As a result the fathering research and information has been shared with fathers and males in closed sessions and with fathers and males in class settings, i.e. high school child development courses; undergraduate and graduate

college courses related to the fields of teacher education, parenting, child development, and sociology.

In a closed group--closed to spouses, teachers of their own children, and other women--men have been willing to be vulnerable. They have been inquisitive about the alternative approaches to family leadership, expressions of affection, and academic involvement taken by their own fathers in their childhood and adolescence. The group sessions have provided a forum where regrets have been released about their relationship with their Dad or where they were able to verbalize what they had, in manhood, come to appreciate in their father's style.

In their role as the father, the concerns they have expressed have varied with the age and number of children already in the family. The first-time father has been concerned with the altered relationship with his wife, his ability to just compentently be a babysitter while his wife gets away for a few hours, and his responsibility to plan for the maximum total development of his first dependent. The father of the school age child has been dubious about his effective participation within the politics of the schoolroom and individual school society. Teenagers have fathers troubled by the availability of drugs, alcohol, and permissive attitudes toward early sexual activity.

When women, and particularly spouses, have been included in the dialogues, there has been no exchange of conversation between male audience participants and the speaker. This seems to indicate a sensitivity to their wives probing, redirecting, and the other helpful ways wives try to improve the personal characteristics and

personalities of their husbands.

Frequently a game approach has been used to build channels of communication within the group. Using an index card as a tool, fathers have been asked to write on one side of the card the most salient duty of the father in the family and to write on the other side the most significant contribution mother makes to the family. Under mother and father the collective duties or privileges have been listed. Pursuing the responses research findings have been shared. Questions have been handled as they arose. Role-playing has been employed to demonstrate different approaches.

A Phil Donahue studio approach was used to produce the thirty-minute television program *Newly Fathers. Fathers were advertised for over a local radio and gathered at a local PBS studio. The hostess and I chatted to get the program going from the personal realm that energized the research project on fathers influences on children's personality development. The hostess then walked through the studio allowing individual males to ask questions. Research and inferences from the findings of various studies were shared following the theme of the questions.

The audio-visual tape Newly Fathers has been used in workshop settings to stimulate exchange of reactions and personal perspective in group situations.

* "Newly Fathers" is one of ten thrity-minute audio-visual tapes in the Focus on Children series produced by Indiana University Television in cooperation with Indiana University School of Education and Iota Chapter of Pi Lambda Theta. The series or individual program is available for rent or purchase by writing Indiana University Audio Visual Center, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

Whenever and whatever the complexion of the interaction, the questions which emerged had a similar tenor. Males appeared to desire an objective basis for evaluating their threshold of attitudes toward children and the child-rearing approach that they were demonstrating. Amazement at the lack of opportunity for fathers to share their parenting frustrations, challenges, failures, and successes was continually expressed in the groups. Requests for articles, books, bibliographies, and schedules for other pertinent groups on fathering specifically were requested.

Neither the order nor the context of a question has particular bearing within the larger body of literature on fathering. The reader is encouraged to notice the trend toward rational decision-making that favors the larger family but particularly the children; the search for credible support in selecting better options from books, tapes, and other fathers; and a general euphoria for parenthood itself. The following questions and answers then are summaries from actual groups of fathers who voluntarily participated in one of the many sessions.

Q1. What can father do for his child?

A1. In this society everything that father does is either optional or situational. The degree and approach of the male counterpart in the parenting partnership requires few stipulations on entry to fatherhood or in maintenance of the biological relationship.

McCandless (1968) reported that fathers assume an instrumental role in family life in 48 societies and an expressive role in eight cultures.

In most patriarchial societies roles are clear-cut; fathers are perceived as the primary breadwinner, the disciplinarian, and the coordinator of community resources. The father demonstrating paternal love and affectionate interaction with his children has less distinct guidelines for the extent of his involvement.

The reported outbursts of anxiety by fathers separated from the wife during childbirth and the historical lines at hospital nursery windows strengthen the belief that father's intuitive desire to participate is hindered by institutional regulations.

Quickly outlining what fathers should do with infants:

1. Hold the baby, talk and play with the baby.
2. Engage in caretaking activities of changing diapers, bathing baby, and giving baby a bottle.
3. Wait for a response from baby such as coos, smiles, eye movements, etc.
4. Encourage the baby's mother to leave baby and to do things away from the house for a break in her schedule.

For toddlers, fathers should moniter their behavior to include:

1. Labeling objects and materials and talking about their use.
2. Reading stories and counting with child, i.e. at bedtime.
3. Taking toddler on short trips to grocery, hardware store, post office, airport, etc., as ocassion arises.

The preschool child's additional needs from father include:

1. Be available a minimum of two hours a day in the child's waking time.
2. Seek information from the child, such as who, when, where, what, and why.
3. Promote independence and problem solving.

School-age children have even greater needs for Dad's involvement:

1. Visits on unannounced basis to the classroom.
2. Supervision of the child's assigned tasks in the home.
3. Expansion of the topics, ideas, and issues discussed at school.
4. Invitations to spend some time occasionally with Dad in his work environment.
5. Shared regular involvement in an organized group involving an activity of the child's interest, i.e., Boy's Club, Boy Scouts, 4-H, hobby groups, etc.

Q2. How does your husband feel about your studying all these fathers?

A2. This question was asked in one of my first follow-up reports to the fathers who participated in my initial research project regarding fathers and thier children. Since that time my husband has gone with me to many speaking engagements.

While I have had marvelous cooperation from fathers, historically there has been low paternal cooperation. Most theories about father-child interactions have originated

with studies of father absence or have grown out of research studies pertaining to maternal influence. My interest in paternal influences on children's personality development is a family project. Due to our personal life situation and choices, we know that the ordering of priorities and decision-making is made easier with information about the implied subsequent consequences of specific fathering behaviors (and mothering).

Q3. I am raising my children a lot like my dad. Where are other fathers getting their information?

A3. Men usually model their child-rearing practices after their own fathers. If this were an unpleasant memory they consciously avoid patterning after father.

Books on parenting are helpful for both fathers and mothers. Biller and Meredith's Father Power is a especially readable book. Either Dodsen's How to Parent or How to Father give helpful guidance.

Recently parent organization meetings are beginning to provide parent education for fathers.

Q4. In general, what are the most important findings in the research regarding effects of fathering attitudes and behaviors on children's personality development?

A4. The most extensive research has been done regarding father-absence.

The findings in this area indicate that the results are negative, cummulative, and lasting. Research has indicated that the first two to three years of life are the most vulnerable of a child's development. Consequently, separation from father during the first two to three years

is most disruptive.

Father-absent boys have been found to exhibit less assertion, less aggression, and less participation in physical contact games. The absence of the male parent has been found to be related to a large number of sex-role conflicts. This interaction pattern is most influential in the child's total development.

The emotional scars created by absent fathers have been associated with feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and generally poor personality development.

Fathers set the limits for their sons' behavior. The absence of limit-setting by the competent male parent has contributed greatly to anti-social behavior and a higher crime rate for youth during adolescence.

In adult life, father-absence during childhood has been found to be a factor both in vocational adjustment problems and in marital problems.

Q5. Does father-absence affect only boys?

A5. Father-absence affects personality development in both girls and boys.

How father treats mother, the amount and quality of time spent interacting with daughters, the limits and expectations set for their behavior, and the continuity of presence all seem to greatly influence feminine development. A girl's heterosexual relationships are closely aligned with the kind of fathering she experienced. Father-absent girls tend to be promiscuous or frigid. A daughter learns that she is

attractive and poised from her father. She learns from her father socially acceptable behavior in the presence of the opposite sex.

Q6. Does the loss of dad affect a child's performance in school?
A6. Father-absent boys tend to have more feminine patterns of performance. In other words, they develop higher verbal skills and show poorer math skill performance.

For both boys and girls, there appear to be characteristics of low academic aptitude, low achievement, and low motivation associated with father-absence. Father-absent boys usually perform below grade average.

Q7. Can this negative impact of the child's personality be modified?
A7. Children seek other male models when they are available. Accessibility to a variety of male models also increases a child's ease in all his interactions. Male intervention where children are separated from their fathers must be begun during infancy (or on loss of the male parent) to have the greatest value. Male volunteers, male counselors, male teachers, and male aides must be a goal of staffing in all programs for young children.

I think legal decisions for child custody must begin to reflect the economic, social, emotional and cognitive handicaps that are inherent in the single parent family headed by the mother.

More and more often fathers are being granted their right to help structure their partial or full participation in the remaining child-rearing years. Also, more and more fathers are being given full custody.

Regardless of the final agreement between the parents and the court, it is important that the child not become slave to confusion. The child must know that one parent assumes responsibility for his security.

Q8. What are the difficulties for the single parent family headed by a woman?

A8. The single woman is generally unable to make the income generated by both parents working or an income equitable to that enjoyed by the family on just father's income. Most women are not in a position to earn a salary commensurate with the male-headed household from the same socio-economic group.

The single woman with children is not easily accepted into all social groups. Demands of career, continuing education, and family concerns narrow even those opportunities that might be open to her.

Mothers do not have the physical strength--or appearance of physical strength--to enforce the rules she sets as the children become teenagers.

Emotionally the child needs the input of two parents.

Q9. What type of discipline is most effective?

A9. Discipline is your approach to teaching the child about the world in which he lives. There are basically three approaches:

1) democratic
2) autocratic
3) rejection

Parenting behaviors over a period of time reflect some of all three but behave most often in one of the three manners.

Parents of infants and toddlers assume all the responsibility for

the child's behavior and are called authoritarian or autocratic. This does not mean punishing. Rather it means the parent controls the environment of the child and closely supervises the actions.

The democratic parent talks to the child. He explains functions, actions, and outcomes. He says what he does not want the child to do in an "I" message, "I do not want you to hit the newspaper while I am reading." He works with the child in a variety of settings thus providing the child a good model or example. This fathering approach feeds the child's feelings of self-worth and self-confidence. The child reared in this environment learns to assess a situation and functions well academically and socially.

The autocratic parent dictates controls. The child dare not fail to perform in the behavior described by the parent. The child who fears the parent's response to his errors often is withdrawn and anxious. He usually performs below grade average.

The rejecting parent is never happy with the child's behavior and is never involved in the child's activities. The child of the rejecting parent may become our school drop-out and juvenile delinquent.

Rare use of reward and rare use of physical punishment get better results. In other words, seldomly pay your child for good behavior. Instead, focus in on that child with questions about his behavior or product. This type of behavior costs time in observation and interaction with the child. It lets him know you care. In reality it is the nicest kind of reward.

Promote children's independence. Encourage them to think of ways to work out a solution.

Communicate with your child's mother. Show that you appreciate and love her. This is a part of discipline when you're away from home. Demonstrating your love and respect for your wife supports the rules when in your absence she must enforce them.

Q10. What type of masculine model has father's involvement in housekeeping and caregiving provided for a son?

A10. The question is most appropriate. In looking at the sex-role preferences of four-year-old nursery school children in 1976-77, I expected to find significant differences from Brown's findings in 1956. Boys today appear to have fathers who are both able and willing to help with the cooking, grocery shopping, laundry, vaccuming, and various other household duties. Girls appear to have greater encouragement to try any of a variety of careers.

My findings, however, for girls' sex-role preference at age four followed along the continuum from high-femininity to high-masculinity much as had Brown's findings. The range of masculine preference scores for boys went from the mid-point to high-masculinity. The two boys whose scores fell between the mid-point and medium-femininity on the feminine side of the continuum had handicaps from birth that predicted feminine personality characteristics.

There is some indication that males carve new areas for performance when a particular male-dominated arena becomes permeated with females.

Sex-role preferences are formed at a very young age. Optimal development is best accomplished by two parents providing male and female models. Preference for one's biological sex should not exclude one from fully realizing their maximum potential as a creative intellectual, social, and emotional member of the human race.

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Sara Kate and Randy Powell
Photograph courtesy Jacqueline Stone

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